

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 INR-07 L-03 ACDA-07
NSAE-00 PA-01 SS-15 PRS-01 SP-02 USIA-06 TRSE-00
SAJ-01 H-01 NSC-05 /066 W
----- 104641 /12

R 231043Z DEC 76
FM AMEMBASSY BONN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4269
SECDEF WASHDC
INFO USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
USNMR SHAPE
CINC EUR VAIHINGEN
CINC USAFE RAMSTEIN

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: NATO, MILI, AWACS, GW
SUBJECT: DEFMIN LEBER INTERVIEW ON AWACS

REFS: A. BONN 21260 (NOTAL); B. BONN 21054 (NOTAL)

BEGIN SUMMARY: IN A NEWSPAPER INTERVIEW, DEFMIN LEBER
HAS RESTATED THE KNOWN GERMAN POSITION ABOUT THE
PROCUREMENT OF AWACS, INDICATING FIRMLY THAT HE WILL
NOT BE RUSHED INTO MAKING A FINAL DECISION. END
SUMMARY.

1. THE DECEMBER 22 EDITION OF THE "FRANKFURTER
ALLGEMEINE" (FAZ) FRONT-PAGED AN INTERVIEW WITH DEFENSE
MINISTER LEBER IN WHICH HE REITERATED MANY OF THE
KNOWN GERMAN CONCERNS ABOUT PROCUREMENT OF THE AWACS
SYSTEM. UNDER THE HEADLINE "LEBER DEMANDS FAIR COST
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SHARING FOR AWACS", LEBER SAID THE FRG COULD NOT TAKE
A FAST DECISION ON AWACS FOR BOTH POLITICAL AND
TECHNICAL REASONS. LEBER INDICATED THAT, SHOULD AWACS
BE ABLE "TO IMPROVE DECISIVELY" FRG SECURITY, IT MUST
BE INTRODUCED. HE FAVORED TECHNICAL IMPROVEMENTS WHEN
THEY CONTRIBUTED TO INCREASING THE DIFFICULTIES FOR A

SURPRISE ATTACK FROM THE EAST.

2. LEBER CONTINUED THAT THE FINANCIAL INVESTMENT FOR, POLITICAL GAIN FROM, AND STRATEGIC EFFECT OF AWACS MUST STAND IN A REASONABLE RELATIONSHIP TO ONE ANOTHER. HOWEVER, THIS COULD NOT NOW BE DEMONSTRATED ABOUT AWACS WITH ANY CERTAINTY. THERE WERE, LEBER NOTED, TOO MANY OPEN POLITICAL QUESTIONS AND TOO FEW TECHNICAL DOCUMENTS AVAILABLE.

3. THE DEFENSE MINISTER SAID HE COULD NOT MAKE A FAVORABLE RECOMMENDATION TO THE BUNDESTAG UNTIL HE HIMSELF HAD A CLEARER PICTURE. HE EMPHASIZED THAT AWACS COULD NOT BE VIEWED AS A GERMAN-AMERICAN PROJECT, SINCE THERE WOULD BE NO POLITICAL GAIN FOR THE ALLIANCE IN SUCH A CASE.

4. LEBER PERCEIVED FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE SYSTEM AS POLITICAL CONTRIBUTIONS DEMONSTRATING ALLIANCE SOLIDARITY. HE SAID COSTS MUST BE RELATED TO ABILITY TO PAY. LEBER THEN REFERRED TO UK PRESSURE FOR A FAST FRG DECISION WHICH, IF NEGATIVE, WOULD PERMIT THE BRITS TO INTRODUCE THEIR OWN EARLY WARNING SYSTEM. LEBER SAID HE DID NOT WANT TO CRITICIZE THE BRITS, BUT WOULD ONLY LIKE TO ASK IF THE BRITS COULD SPEND AS MUCH FOR AWACS AS THEY COULD FOR PROCURING THEIR OWN SYSTEM. HE THEN REFERRED TO A POSSIBLE FRENCH INTEREST IN THE SYSTEM NOTING THAT, IF PARIS WERE TO PARTICIPATE, IT WOULD BE, IN HIS OPINION, A POLITICAL GESTURE OF GREAT IMPORTANCE FOR THE ALLIANCE.
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5. FINALLY, LEBER MADE THE POINT THAT AWACS SHOULD NOT CROWD OUT OTHER WEAPONS SYSTEMS. HE FORESAW GERMAN FUNDS BECOMING AVAILABLE FOR AWACS IN 1981 WHEN THE OTHER COSTLY SYSTEMS CURRENTLY BEING PROCURED BY THE FRG HAD BEEN PAID FOR.

6. A FAZ EDITORIAL IN THE SAME EDITION CONCLUDED THAT AWACS WAS NECESSARY FOR THE ALLIANCE, BUT POINTED OUT THAT SERIOUS NEGOTIATIONS AMONG THE NATO PARTNERS WERE REQUIRED BECAUSE OF THE TREMENDOUS COSTS INVOLVED. THE EDITORIAL REFERRED TO LEBER'S "YES, BUT" ANSWER TO AWACS AND THE FACT THAT THE DEFMIN WOULD NOT DECIDE THE ISSUE QUICKLY.

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7. COMMENT: IN REPEATING THE STANDARD GERMAN CATECHISM ON AWACS, LEBER HAS NOT REALLY SAID ANYTHING NEW. HIS GOING PUBLIC IN THE FAZ INTERVIEW COULD BE INTERPRETED AS A RESPONSE TO EARLIER PRESS ARTICLES IN WHICH BOTH SPD AND CDU/CSU POLITICIANS EXPRESSED SKEPTICISM ABOUT PROCURING THE SYSTEM (REFTELS). A "SPIEGEL" ARTICLE EARLIER IN THE WEEK ALSO POINTED OUT THAT DM SIX BILLION WAS A LOT TO PAY FOR AN ADDITIONAL NINE MINUTES WARNING TIME WHICH AWACS WOULD PROVIDE.

LEBER'S STATEMENT REITERATES AGAIN THAT, FOR DOMESTIC POLITICAL REASONS, HE CANNOT AND WILL NOT BE RUSHED INTO A DECISION. MOREOVER, THE DEFENSE MINISTER HIMSELF STILL SEEMS SOMEWHAT SKEPTICAL ABOUT AWACS AND REMAINS TO BE CONVINCED THAT ITS PROCUREMENT WILL BE

BOTH STRATEGICALLY AND POLITICALLY MEANINGFUL FOR THE
ALLIANCE. PRESUMABLY, GERMAN REPRESENTATIVES AT THE
UPCOMING ALLIANCE MEETINGS ON AWACS WILL BE ASKING
SIMILAR QUESTIONS.
STOESSEL

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